

# SEBPA

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**Southeast Beef Producers Association**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to produce safe beef for consumers, to treat the cattle humanely and to promote the beef industry in the American marketplace.

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## Southeast Beef Producers Association

### BACKGROUND

The Southeast Beef Producers Association (SEBPA) is a not-for-profit organization. Their mission is to promote the beef and cattle industry in the southeastern region of the United States. SEBPA is funded by its members, primarily beef and cattle ranchers, and a large percentage of their revenue is used to fund public relations and advertising programs aimed at increasing the purchase and consumption of beef products.

Our mission is to produce safe beef for consumers, to treat the cattle humanely and to promote the beef industry in the American marketplace.

Early American cattle originated in Europe but came to the Americas by many routes: Texas, Florida, California, Virginia and New England. By the time cattle reached Texas and California from Mexico in the 1500s, a cattle industry was emerging in Florida. Weighing 600 to 800 pounds, these cattle, known as woods cattle, Florida Crackers or Florida Scrubs, flourished and are still around today.

Beef cattle production represents the largest single segment of American agriculture. In 2002, more farms were classified as beef cattle operations than any other type of farm. In 2006, producers of meat animals were responsible for more than \$65 billion in added value to the U.S. economy, as measured by their contribution to the national output.

In 2006, per capita consumption of beef was 62.9 pounds, compared to 61.4 pounds for chicken. Consumption of beef has remained stable throughout the past decade. Consumers' love of great steaks and burgers, their confidence in the safety of U.S. beef and their renewed interest in the nutritional benefits of protein help create strong demand for beef.

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## **FACT SHEET**

Mad cow disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is a chronic degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system of cattle.

Mad cow disease was first identified in an outbreak in England in the mid-1980s.

Infection can occur in the brain, trigeminal ganglia, tonsils, spinal cord, dorsal root ganglion, and distal ileum of the small intestine of cattle.

Tissue from the infected cattle's central nervous system, including the brain and spinal chord, is the most infectious.

It is possible but very uncommon for the disease to develop spontaneously in cattle. The disease is not contagious, but is most commonly spread through the consumption of infectious central nervous tissue.

Infectious tissue may be found in some hot dogs, taco fillings, bologna and other products made from ground or chopped meat, due to contamination during the extraction of the last bits of meat from cow carcasses.

In 1997 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prohibited the use of most mammalian protein in the manufacture of animal feed intended for cattle and other ruminants.

So far, none of the CJD cases diagnosed in the US have been linked to US-produced beef. Only one person in the United States has been confirmed to have variant vCJD-- she grew up in Britain and was probably infected there.

Symptoms begin with confusion, depression, and behavioral changes, then impaired vision and coordination, and later dementia. There is no cure, treatment, or vaccine for humans infected with mad cow disease.

The disease infected cattle in 19 countries in 2003. The United States had its first case in December of that year. The disease still kills 2-3 cattle each day in Europe.

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### CRISIS PLAN

#### 1. Vulnerabilities:

a. Quality and safety are overseen by individual farmers on their own farms.

Although the USDA has guidelines and tests facilities, it's impossible to know exact procedures taken by everyone that has contact with the cows.

b. Once the meat has left a particular facility, farmers have no control over what conditions the meat is subjected to, or in what manner it is handled.

c. The safety of meat is a highly sensitive subject in modern culture. People are becoming increasingly health-conscious, and devote greater awareness to the quality of the food they consume.

2. The Crisis Team will be made up of SEBPA's internal public relations director, Emily Petree and SEBPA CEO, Kelly Coffed. Additionally, members of Smith, Brown and King Public Relations Group, who have been consulted by SEBPA will be the media relations director, Laura Peacock; website manager, Jill Bledsoe; and press agent, Amanda Zambrano. Other members will include interns to assist in carrying out the logistics of the crisis plan, such as maintaining inquiry logs and sending information to appropriate outlets.

3. The Crisis Team will be responsible for updating employees on pertinent information and advise them on how to respond to possible media inquiries. Further, the website will be updated and maintained as information becomes available, in accordance with the submission of news releases. All media inquiries and interviews will be directed to the press agent, media relations director and public relations director.

4. The designated spokesperson will be the press agent, Amanda Zambrano. Amanda's working relationship with both local and national media has proven effective in relieving skepticism in the past, and will work to SEBPA's advantage in future possible crises.
5. The backup spokesperson will be SEBPA's CEO, Kelly Coffed. As the face of the company, Kelly serves as a credible source for this sensitive information to come from. The media will trust her involvement in the organization and the accuracy of the information she conveys.
6. The first contact will be the USDA, because it is an initial point of reference in this industry for media. The USDA will be contacted by SEBPA's press agent. Amanda is internally connected with SEBPA, as well as involved with the USDA, making her a fitting liaison between the organizations.
7. From there, a general press release will be distributed to major national and local media, along with the time and place of a scheduled press conference. National media is vital to contact because beef produced in the Southeast is distributed nationally. Local media, in addition, is crucial because employees of the affected farms will be looking for updates.
8. A Message and Media Center will be set up at the Ritz-Carlton in Atlanta. SEBPA's offices are located in Atlanta, and it is a major hub of media communications in the Southeast.
9. Fact sheets and backgrounders will be prepared in advance and updated regularly on topics such as health benefits of eating meat, how to cook meat properly and facts about controversial topics such as Mad Cow Disease. In addition, a contact sheet containing the contact information for SEBPA's Crisis Team will be distributed to ensure that inquiries are direct to the correct person, and in turn, that the most accurate information is disseminated.

10. Media inquiries are to be responded to in as timely a manner as possible. For inquiries that cannot be answered immediately, contact information will be gathered so that a response can be discovered. Documents will be produced and updated as information develops to allow all members of the Crisis Team to disseminate parallel and correct information.

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## **STATEMENT SHEET**

Recent reports have developed linking a child's death in Florida to mad cow disease. It is suspected that it originated from a cattle farm in the Southeast.

The Southeast Beef Producers Association is working hand in hand with the USDA and taking all available measures to contain the source of the problem.

An epidemiological test is underway to pinpoint the source.

Mad Cow Disease is a very slow moving disease that affects the body over time. Therefore, if Mad Cow is the source of the child's death, he consumed the diseased beef in years prior and there is no immediate concern for the beef available now.

Mad Cow is a neurological disease. You would have to consume the brain or spinal cord to contract it, which is very unlikely.

At this time, we are not aware of another death linked to the case or involving contaminated beef products.

We are taking all precautions to eliminate any future Mad Cow related deaths and recently put a ban on sending "downer cows," or cows that have been sick or injured, to the slaughter house.

Downer cows are suspected to hold a greater chance for having Mad Cow Disease and other illnesses.

There is no indication that this death was related to consuming beef from a downer cow. However, eliminating the chance for consuming this beef will eliminate any future chance for Mad Cow diseased beef.

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**Southeast Beef Producers Association**

NEWS RELEASE

November 18, 2008  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information:  
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## **MAD COW CASE IN FLORIDA SPARKS QUESTIONS ON SAFETY OF AMERICAN BEEF**

### ***Southeast Beef Producers Association Working Assures Beef Is Safer Now than Ever Before***

ATLANTA - The Southeast Beef Producers Association (SEBPA) will have a press conference at the Ritz-Carlton Nov. 19, 2008 at 8 a.m., in response to the recent Mad Cow findings by the USDA. At the press conference SEBPA will address all the actions that have been made to assure public safety.

"We are taking every step to make certain our beef consumers are safe," SEBPA CEO, Kelly Coffed said.

SEBPA is working closely with the USDA to determine which farms may have had the "downer" cows that led to the recent Mad Cow case in Florida.

SEBPA Press Agent, Amanda Zambrano reminds that Mad Cow is very difficult to contract because the brain or spinal cord would have to be consumed and this is difficult to do with burgers and steaks.

The Southeast Beef Producers Association (SEBPA) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote the beef industry in the southeastern region of the United States. SEBRA is funded by its members, primarily beef and cattle ranchers and a large percentage of their revenue is used to fund public relations and advertising programs aimed at increasing the purchase and consumption of beef products.

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## **PRESS CONFERENCE DETAILS**

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Location:** The Ritz Carlton, Ball Room A  
181 Peachtree Street, N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30303

**Spokesperson:** Amanda Zambrano, SEBPA Press Agent

**Introduced by:** Kelly Coffed, SEBPA CEO

**Method to contact media:**

- News Release

**Media Outlets Contacted:**

- Southeastern Radio Stations  
- Local/National Television Stations on all major networks (ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, NBC)  
- Local/National Newspapers (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, USA Today, Birmingham News, etc.*)

**Technical Requirements:**

- Microphones  
- Soundboards  
- Translator  
- Extension Cords  
- Projection Screens  
- Cameras  
- Seating for media and those in attendance  
- On-stage seating for the SEBPA crisis team

**Logistical Manager:** Laura Peacock, Director of Media Relations

## Possible Questions for Press Conference

1. Do we know the source of the Mad Cow disease?  
-An epidemiological test is under way to help us find the source of the problem
2. Should we be concerned about eating beef?  
-No. Mad Cow disease is a very slow moving disease, meaning that if that is, in fact what caused the child's death, he probably ate the beef years ago and you do not need to be worried about beef you are eating now.
3. Do we know of any other cases of Mad Cow?  
-No. We have not heard of any other cases that we can link to this one.
4. What are the chances that this would happen again?  
-Very slim that this could happen again because it is a neurological disease. You would have to consume the cow's brain or spinal chord to contract it, which is very unlikely, if you are eating something like a steak or hamburger.
5. What are you doing to regain the confidence of American consumers?  
-We recently put a ban on sending "downer" cattle to the slaughterhouse.
6. What exactly are downer cattle?  
-These are sick or injured cattle. By putting a ban on them we are insuring that they will not end up at the slaughterhouse so there is not chance for you to consume them.
7. Is there a relationship between downer cows and Mad Cow disease?  
-Yes. Downers are considered more likely to have mad cow disease and other illnesses, and therefore pose a greater threat to people who eat them.
8. What were some of the symptoms of Mad Cow disease?  
-People become very sensitive to touch and are unable to stand. High fever is also associated with Mad Cow.
9. Did these symptoms appear in the child?  
-He was never sensitive to touch, but did lose the ability to stand and ran a fever most of the time he was sick.
10. Will you be doing anything else to help to calm the American public and assure them the beef they are eating is safe?  
-Yes. We will launch a Beef Safety campaign in January of 2009 which will address many of the concerns of the American public concerning beef in the US and should reassure them that it is safer than it has ever been.



Each cattle facility that is a member of SEBPA follows guidelines that insure a safe product to the consumer.



Humane treatment of the cattle lowers the risk of Mad Cow disease and other beef-related diseases.